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DE RUEHBUL #5250/01 3021132  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
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FM AMEMBASSY KABUL  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3797  
INFO RUCNAFG/AFGHANISTAN COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 KABUL 005250

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/26/2016  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [EAID](#) [PHUM](#) [SOCI](#) [AF](#)  
SUBJECT: PRT/ASADABAD: MURDERS OF KORENGAL OUTPOST  
EMPLOYEES -- AND THE RESPONSE

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Classified By: Classified by PolCounselor SRosenberry for  
reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

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Summary  
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¶2. (C) On October 19 eight local employees of the Korengal Outpost (the "KOP") in Kunar Province were robbed and murdered shortly after leaving the camp. This represents an escalation in the violence in the Korengal, and the latest in a line of broken promises on security from the Korengali elders. Governor Deedar plans to reimpose a partial blockade of the valley, this time more far-reaching than the earlier more limited restrictions on access to the valley that were imposed in August and relaxed in September. We support this effort to isolate and punish the hostile forces that currently dominate the Korengal.  
End Summary.

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Murdered on the way home  
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¶3. (C) The attacks occurred as the eight employees were apparently going home for the Eid holiday. They reportedly were stopped four kilometers from the KOP by armed men, who took their money (about \$6000) and then shot them. Two men who claimed to have been traveling with the victims told police that the assailants, judging by their speech, were Korengalis.

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Hostility to Outsiders, including the GOA  
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¶4. (C) The Korengal valley, located about twenty five kilometers west of Asadabad, has long been a festering security problem. Home to perhaps ten thousand people, the valley has hosted anti-GOA militants (including Gulbuddin Hekmatyar) since the fall of the Taliban. Long before the presence of foreign militant groups, the Korengal had a reputation for hostility to outsiders. This hostility, combined with militants

armed and funded from abroad, has made the Korengal the epicenter of instability in Kunar province. The valley-wide shura and the lesser shuras for each village are understood to be controlled, either through intimidation or willing cooperation, by militants hostile to the U.S. and the GOA. However, up and down the greater Pech River valley area, progress in security is being made with the presence of ANSF and ISAF forces in conjunction with developmental projects, like roads and bridges, designed to bring economic stimulation and progress into the area.

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Elders' Complicity in Series of Brutal Attacks  
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15. (C) Coalition forces have launched operations focused on the Korengal several times. In February 2006 coalition forces met with Korengali elders, and agreed on measures to improve security and prevent the valley from being used as a sanctuary for militants. These included the establishment of an Afghan National Army outpost, and an assurance from the elders that they would cooperate with GOA and CF to prevent attacks on the outpost and prevent infiltration by the enemy. However, since the outpost was established in April, it has been under frequent attack. In June the PRT visited the KOP, and met there with local elders. While commiserating with us about the security problems in the valley, the elders were very anxious to wind up the meeting early, insisting they had to leave for another event. Shortly after their departure, the KOP came under sustained attack by about forty men; given the circumstances, we have no doubts about the elders' complicity. And in July, five passengers in a vehicle, two of which were KOP

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local employees, were killed in a similar manner to the most recent attack. One person survived the July shootings, and reported that the killers spoke Urdu.

16. (C) The killings in July and October were the largest single incidents of people being murdered, but they are not the only such incidents. In the past year, about 25 people in all have been killed in the Korengal. Some were our employees; others were family members of employees. Following the latest murders, about 300 people gathered in the bazaar in Asadabad, shouting "death to Pakistan, the Taliban, and al-Qaeda."

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Restrictions on Access to Valley Led to Assurances  
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17. (C) In August, following an IED attack which killed three U.S. soldiers in Korengal, Pech District Governor Mohamed Rahman ordered his police to control entry and search all road traffic in and out of the valley at Kandegal (which sits at the mouth of the valley astride its only road). He also ordered that only elders be allowed in and out of the valley on foot. Rahman's restrictions on movement were implemented at about the same time as TF-Spartan's Operation Big North Wind, which sent 1/32 infantry into the Korengal in an effort to isolate the more militant southern part of the valley from the northern part. The squeeze put on Korengalis allegedly caused some of them to start pulling strings in Kabul to try - so far unsuccessfully - to have Rahman removed from office. Korengal elders also approached Rahman, and assured him that they would again make efforts to prevent the Korengal from being used by militants to stage

attacks. Governor Deedar relaxed the restrictions blockade in September, in response to the elders' assurances.

¶8. (C) Despite such assurances, attacks on the KOP and Afghan security forces continued. Earlier this month District Governor Rahman told us that continued attacks in the Korengal had led him to convene a jirga of elders from around the Pech valley (into which the Korengal empties), to discuss the threat posed by Korengalis to the security and economic development of the region. They had agreed to again impose a partial blockade on the Korengal. Some at the meeting also said they would go into the Korengal and burn the houses of elders there if the violence didn't stop. Clearly such moves have not given pause to militants in the Korengal.

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Proposed Response to Latest Violence  
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¶9. (C) We spoke with Kunar Governor Deedar on October 20, to agree on a strategy for responding to the killings of the KOP employees. The Governor agreed with us that we should follow a four-element plan.

--First, engage leaders in the GOA and international community to condemn the killings, emphasizing that the Korengali elders have repeatedly violated their own assurances and written agreements which they entered into with regional authorities.

-- Second, highlight in local information operations that the Korengali elders have twice failed to come through on their assurances on security, and that, over the past year, some 25 innocents, including employees of U.S. forces or their families, have been murdered in the Korengal.

-- Third, engage with Saafi tribal leaders to build a ring of sanctions around the Korengal, to isolate the elders in the Korengal who are behind the attacks.

-- Fourth, make clear to Kunaris that not only are transporting and aiding the enemy criminal acts, so is

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ignoring enemy activities and failing to report them. Our aim, agreed the Governor, is to create a "moral lashkar," a campaign to isolate the militants in the Korengal from the mass of residents there and the people of Kunar, to make clear that violence prevents development and reconstruction, and to prevent anyone, whether locally or in Kabul, from making excuses for the Korengalis' actions.

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COMMENT  
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¶10. (C) With the presence of ANSF and ISAF forces, in conjunction with development projects, including roads and bridges, designed to bring development into the area, there is progress in the greater Pech River Valley area on security. Most people around the Pech and even into the mouth of the Karengal are receptive to ISAF forces, though some are very interested in seeing how long we stay. A small group of Korengalis have been able to hold the valley hostage and to use it as a staging ground for militant attacks which have disrupted development in the province. They have created enemies among other Kunaris.

¶11. (C) We support the governor's effort to use this broad disenchantment with the militants as leverage against those responsible for or accepting

of the violence. The message is: that they are the enemies of Afghanistan, they must be isolated from the rest of Kunar province until they have expelled the militants in their midst, and that development and reconstruction cannot continue unless the mass of Kunaris recognize that they cannot turn a blind eye to militant activities. The governor is looking for political support from Kabul as he delivers this message. The embassy continues to encourage senior GOA officials to create opportunities to visit the provinces to publicly support this and similar efforts by local officials. End Comment  
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